

## VIETNAM: HONORING THOSE WHO SERVED

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, this past Sunday, April 30, was the 25th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam war. And that reaches deep into the soul of every Member of this body, all across America, and all across the world.

Our involvement with Vietnam was filled with discord, it was filled with anxiety, and it tore sections and generations of our country apart. It began slowly. It gradually escalated and became "a bottomless quagmire" for America, "our longest, costliest, and . . . least popular war," until it finally came to an end.

Many in our country were very ambivalent about this war. Some thought we didn't fight hard enough, some thought we turned our backs on the South Vietnamese, and some thought we should have fought a lot harder. Many became disillusioned with our Government. I think that experience changed the nature of American politics and public life for at least some time to come.

However, there should be no ambivalence whatsoever about those who fought that war. Today I want to pay homage to those who fought that war. It doesn't matter whether you were for or against the war. All who served there deserve our appreciation, our respect, our caring, our compassion. It would have been easier to fight in a popular war. There are such wars, oddly enough. It is obtuse to say that, but it is true.

But it took guts, courage, and endurance to fight in that war and survive it; to resist the erosion of the bad morale which overtook at least part of our ground forces in Vietnam. And then, of course, there was the lack of united support from the home front which had to have just overwhelming consequences, not only while the soldiers were there, but even more so when they returned.

Those who served did their duty, and they did it under very difficult, trying circumstances. Their motto might very well have been what Alexander Pope said:

Act well your part, therein all honor lies.

Looking back at this war, like the war before it and others, what strikes me with enormous poignancy and tenderness, is how young our soldiers were. Many were teenagers—18- and 19-year-old men and women—from familiar and comfortable surroundings, leading lives we all might identify with, sent to a completely foreign country, a foreign culture, halfway around the world, not knowing what to expect. They encountered baking heat, torrential rain, fire ants, leeches, and the enemy. They could not imagine the world of horror that awaited them when they got there. Presumably they

were trained and told about it, but I think it was unimaginable to them when they got there. There was no clear enemy line. They could be ambushed at any minute. They couldn't tell enemies from allies.

Some never came back. The more than 58,000 names on the Vietnam Memorial Wall attest to that. But painful as it is to view those names, it does not begin to encompass the scope of pain caused by that war. Like a pebble thrown in a pool, each single name on the wall is ringed by concentric circles of others touched by that person's death—widows, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, friends. For all in that pool, certain hopes and dreams died as well. We grieve for all of them.

Some came back wounded. In an instant, life could change. Soldiers could step on a landmine; they could be killed by friendly fire; they could come under random attack. They never knew from moment to moment. Due to the wonders of modern medicine, many of those who, in earlier wars, would have died, did not and were saved; they survived. But merely surviving posed tremendous burdens on those who did. The process of adapting, accepting, and moving on is easy to say, very hard to do.

So I salute the stubborn resilience and perseverance of those who did move on with life after recovering from injury.

Some came back suffering from emotional trauma—people call it PTSD—and many other things. For them, it has been a very hard road to make peace with the past. They are still haunted by it, fighting it in their nightmares, in startle reflexes to sudden noises which bring back memories of perceived danger. They may turn to alcohol to numb the constant pain, to drown the memories.

Veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder deserve our most profound compassion, love and caring. As we have discovered, PTSD in fact goes back even to World War I. We are discovering a lot of things about the consequences of war. We have no way of knowing what people have been through, those of us who were not there. But we cannot judge their continuing pain. We cannot judge them. But we can honor them, and we need to do that, to respect them for what they have done, and to hope they will recover as others did.

As a Senator from West Virginia, I have more than a personal interest in this war. Statistics show that West Virginia's soldiers suffered more casualties per capita during that war than any other State in the Union. On this day, I salute our West Virginia veterans in particular. I am enormously proud of the sons and daughters of West Virginia, who, as they have done throughout history, volunteered or

were drafted, and went to fight and to protect their country and their freedom, mountain men doing what needed to be done.

That fighting spirit and strength of character runs incredibly deep in this Senator's State, and this Senator is very proud of it.

Lyndon Johnson called the war "dirty, brutal and difficult." It tore apart our country, devastated lives, caused tremendous personal hardship and unbearable pain. Twenty years later, the scars are still healing.

I am reminded of the words of Maya Lin, the young architect student who designed the Vietnam Memorial. In conceptualizing the form of her design, she wrote:

I thought about what death is, what a loss is. A sharp pain that lessens with time, but never quite heals over. The idea occurred to me there on the site. Take a knife and cut open the earth, and with time, the grass would heal it.

With time, the wounds of Vietnam will heal. But we should never forget the courage and bravery of those who served there. Let us always honor our men and women who fought and died in Vietnam.

(The remarks of Mr. ROCKEFELLER pertaining to the introduction of S. 2494 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I yield 5 minutes to Senator GRAMS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

## NUCLEAR WASTE POLICY ACT OF 2000—VETO—Continued

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I want to take just a few minutes today to speak about the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act and the President's recent veto of this legislation.

Throughout the past 5 years, I have repeatedly come to the Senate floor to discuss this important issue and its impact on my home State of Minnesota. I have, on countless occasions, laid out for Members of the Senate the history of the nuclear energy program and the promises made by the Federal Government. Every time I sit down to discuss this matter with stakeholders, I am reminded that the Federal Government not only allowed, but strongly encouraged, the construction of nuclear power plants across the country.

This point needs to be clearly understood by the Members of this body. Our Nation's nuclear utilities did not go out and invest in nuclear power in spite of Federal Government warnings of future difficulties. Instead, they were encouraged by the Federal Government to turn to nuclear power to